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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2636
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5064
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2817
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2682
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3308
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
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RHMFISS/CDR USTRANSCOM SCOTT AFB IL
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000469

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [EAIR](#) [MARR](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: OVERFLIGHT CAP AND THE WAY FORWARD

REF: A. ASHGABAT 0178

[1](#)B. ASHGABAT 0350

[1](#)C. ASHGABAT 0365

[1](#)D. ASHGABAT 0458

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Sylvia Reed Curran for reasons 1
.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: We have nearly reached the overflight cap of 1600 the Turkmenistan government imposed as a continuation of annual renewal of blanket overflight. While DAO will process requests for special flights (MEDEVAC, etc.), all other flights have stopped in order not to exceed the limit. While the Turkmen have refused overflight to contract flights, they have not denied overflight permission to those aircraft covered by the blanket agreement. However, Turkmenistan State Civil Aviation officials have told us that unless outstanding overflight fees are paid by April 27, they will then start denying permission to all USG aircraft. We suggest that Assistant Secretary Boucher raise the overflight/fee issues with President Berdimuhamedov and come armed with concrete proposals. State Civil Aviation officials have already expressed an interest in receiving fuel trucks and ATC upgrades, but gifts of other equipment may also be acceptable. END SUMMARY.

OVERFLIGHT CAP

[1](#)2. (C) We have nearly reached the overflight cap of 1600 the Turkmenistan government imposed as a continuation of annual renewal of blanket overflight. Although accounting varies, it appears that there have been approximately 1542 overflights since December 1, 2008, when overflight was last renewed. Because we were rapidly reaching the limit, Embassy DAO asked OSD on April 6 to stop overflights of Turkmenistan. DAO will process requests for special (e.g., Embassy support, MEDEVAC, etc.) flights, but for no others. Exceeding the limit (which we did in 2008) would make it very difficult for USG officials to negotiate raising the cap.

[1](#)3. (C) To date, Turkmenistan State Civil Aviation (THY) officials have refused overflight to 11 contract flights because of non-payment of overflight charges dating from 2007 and 2008. THY recently sent a bill for charges from February of this year. They will continue to deny permission to all

flights not/not covered by our blanket overflight agreement until the matter is settled. Informally (i.e., not by official diplomatic note), THY officials told DAO that starting April 27, they will deny overflight permission to aircraft covered by the blanket overflight, if the overflight bill is not paid. We have yet to receive a diplomatic note informing us of this development. It is likely that is because Turkmen officials know that Assistant Secretary Boucher will soon arrive to discuss the issue.

FEE PAYMENT

14. (C) THY claims that the U.S. military owes \$31,314.50 for overflight charges from 2007, 2008, and 2009. THY officials have threatened to bill us for flights going as far back as 2001. We believe this problem surfaced because of the lack of revenue to THY caused by the decision not to land U.S. aircraft at Ashgabat airport until the fuel pit is repaired. The issue of overflight charges for planes not landing in Turkmenistan had not been raised previously (NOTE: We have had blanket overflight since 2003. END NOTE.). We estimate that, during the eight months of inactivity, Turkmenistan State Civil Aviation could have received \$360,000 - \$600,000 in landing fees alone from USG planes refueling at the airport.

GAS AND GO

15. (C) A fuel pit work-around started at the end of March which allowed seven aircraft to be refueled prior to

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overflights being suspended. The seven aircraft spent over \$100,000 in ground services and fuel. The "work-around" entails having a service member observe refueling from Turkmen fuel trucks. On April 10, Embassy received a diplomatic note granting permission to import two R-11 fuel trucks.

16. (C) If the originally proposed timeline for fuel pit repair holds, the refurbished fuel pit will be operational by the end of June. According to that timeline, the first repaired Turkmen fuel truck would return to Ashgabat by the first week of June. However, it has yet to leave Turkmenistan. The Turkmen fuel trucks were to go separately to England and have an eight-week turn-around.

THE WAY FORWARD

17. (C) Without a resolution of the fee payment issue, it would be impossible to get the Turkmen to agree to raising the cap. The U.S. Government does not pay overflight fees for state aircraft, but we may be able to resolve the overflight fee issue by "in-kind" gifts. We suggest that A/S Boucher raise the issue with President Berdimuhamedov and come armed with concrete proposals. THY has expressed interest in both fuel trucks and ATC upgrades (possibly to Ashgabat and Turkmenabat airports). Fire trucks and other equipment may also be acceptable to the Turkmen. The Turkmen may not be willing to discuss increasing overflight beyond 3500 flights/year. Depending on what the U.S. side agrees is the optimal number, we may need to be prepared to discuss larger projects (runway repair).

MILES